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ABSTRACT

Research and theory indicates that successful teaching and learning occur when activities are focused on the individual learner's cognitive and affective needs. However, a strong emphasis toward cognitive development, encouraged by competency based education and back to basics movements, continues to influence classroom procedures. Children should be encouraged to talk, converse, share experiences, and argue. This type of affective learning is more effective than cognitive learning because it concerns the individual at a specific stage of development. (CJ)

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HAVE WE EXCHANGED THE INDIVIDUAL FOR OUR SUCCESS AND CONTENT?

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HAVE WE EXCHANGED THE INDIVIDUAL FOR OUR SUCCESS AND CONTENT?

Education has presented challenges for educators throughout history with many unanswered questions and many unsolved problems remaining: What is teaching? What is learning? Can one person teach another? If so, what is the best method? How does learning occur? Can learning be facilitated? Can learning be impeded? Are educators of today utilizing lessons from the past for program planning and implementation? Are they willing to follow effective teaching techniques indicated in research? If these questions are to be answered, one must interpret the concepts of affective and cognitive learning as they evolved during the progression of education.

Affective learning results from an individualized and humanistic approach to education. Affective learning influences or affects learners and is concerned with each as a unique individual - an individual with emotions and feelings. Knowledge is important in affective learning as it applies to an individual and present stage of development.

Cognitive learning is emphasized when learning is directed toward knowledge, i.e., content. Teachers are responsible usually for directing all experiences and often rely heavily upon the use of textbooks. Generally, plans are developed solely by teachers, and in this setting all students are expected normally to be involved in similar learning activities. Traditional education (as this approach is labled often) is organized in such a manner that teachers talk and children remain quiet as expected following directions given by teachers.

By contrast, in a classroom utilizing affective learning techniques, students are encouraged to talk, to express ideas, to share feelings, and to become involved. A wide range of activities provides opportunities for meeting individual needs of all students. The prime objective of affective learning approaches? Student involvement.

Affective learning approaches are not new to education. They were first identified and advocated by Geambattesta Vico in 1725. He criticized educators of the day for being subject matter oriented only (Vico 1965) and emphasized importance of, first, understanding children's nature and how they learn, then, matching activities to needs. Vico placed great importance on need of active involvement to enhance learning and identified specific areas for active involvement. He was interested in developing creativity, as well as the art of oratory, in children. As he studied the educational systems, Vico took issue with their traditional subject matter emphasis approaches. He believed these approaches were harmful for children because they did not promote learning. He wanted to see educational methods developed that would center around needs of children.

Rousseau's Emile (1761) further identified affective and humanistic methods as being most effective types of education. Throughout his book, Rousseau continually stresses importance of first understanding children's nature and then providing activities to meet specific needs. The main thrust of Rousseau's work centers around individualized education and includes experience learning, active involvement of learners, and human approaches when working with children. Rousseau stressed a naturalistic attitude and believed educators should be aware of children's natural

stages of development and should provide activities that would encourage this development. He criticized traditional methods of education, believeing them to be unnatural and harmful to natural development of children.

Traditional subject matter oriented schools disturbed Johann Pestalozzi to the point that he referred to them as "stifling machines." He (1781, 1801) made many contributions to affective learning concepts when he emphasized early childhood education, sense learning, and oral language development. He agreed with Rousseau's naturalistic view and believed that the natural approach was best because it met needs of natural development of children. Pestalozzi's suggestions include such activities as active involvement of children and oral language development through experience. He saw schools as hindrances to learning because children were expected to sit, listen, and be quiet most of the time. The contributions made by Pestalozzi are valuable to educators seeking to understand concepts of affective learning.

Leo Tolstoy, although not as well known for his contributions as Pestalozzi, also identified many effective methods of teaching (1862). Traditional schools were accused of being designed for comfort of teachers rather than designed as effective learning atmospheres for children. Tolstoy recognized value in identifying individual differences among children, also. In his own school, individualized instruction was put into practice, through encouraging freedom, active involvement, and experience learning. From these activities, many creative projects evolved naturally. Tolstoy's students created many interesting stories which were written and were read as a result of permitted freedom.

Activities encouraged by Tolstoy for his students were similar to many of the experiences Colonel Francis Parker recommended in the progressive movement.

Parker, superintendent of Quincy, Massachusetts School System (1875) and leader of the progressive movement in education, enriched elementary curricula by identifying child-centered approaches. Parker's deep understanding of children and of how educators can enhance learning is obvious throughout his work. He is credited with having paved the way for John Dewey.

Dewey (1921) emphasized experience and active involvement of students. One of the most prolific writers in educational fields, he believed answers to education were found by beginning with each individual and letting them learn by doing. Dewey critized the traditional schools, called them "sit and listen" schools, and strongly believed in student involvement. He favored a child-centered approach to education as opposed to teacher-centered or subject matter-centered. He saw school as part of a child's life, a place for living and doing. For Dewey, all activities for children needed to be interesting to them, to offer opportunities for involvement, and to provide for experience learning. Many experiences encouraged by Dewey included social settings, where children were allowed to talk and work together.

Viewing conversation as a valuable part of learning, Jean Piaget also encourages verbal activities in school. He bases his opinions on knowledge gained from actual case studies. Like other educators, both past and present, Piaget feels that traditional teaching methods and

school practices do not promote effective learning; instead, they can be actually detrimental to learning. Piaget's concern addresses the practice of restricting, or in some instances prohibiting, verbal activity of children.

In Moral Judgment of the Child, Piaget outlines mental development processes of children. He identifies three kinds of learning: physical (concrete manipulations), verbal (talking), and social (group and other interaction). He considers these to be necessary experiences in children's normal development. Piaget specifically mentions the importance of oral language experience. This is necessary, he says, for adjustment with others, clarification of thinking, and for practice in becoming more coherent and logical. The fact that talking is not permitted in most traditional schools is one of Piaget's major criticisms.

Another criticism Piaget makes of traditional settings is their failure to provide for individual differences. He says this occurs when all children in a given class are required to learn the same things. In his discussion of traditional education Piaget identifies three assumptions made by traditional educators: (1) All children of a given age should learn the same thing. (2) Verbal explanations made by the teacher are very important. (3) Self-selected work for children and free talking in class are a waste of time. Disagreeing with all three assumptions, Piaget recommends that teachers be aware of children's current levels of functioning, orient the classroom toward individual differences, and give them control of much of their own learning.

Piaget explains that teachers exploit children when they fail to modify curricula for individuals. He contends that a major responsibility of schools should be to encourage children to talk, to converse, to share experiences, and to argue. At this point it is interesting to note that many traditional educators perceive discipline as their major concern for developing basic skills.

The age-old controversy about the concerns of how to teach is discussed by John P. Miller (1976). The community surrounding the school often calls for basic education, but "even if the community is more concerned with basic skills, it is my belief that the three R's cannot be detached from affective development. A person with a low conception of himself or with negative feelings about school will have a difficult time learning even the most basic skills. In short, the teacher cannot afford to fragment the curriculum into solely cognitive or affective components, or the student will not develop either skill mastery or personal integration." (1976 p. 6)

As one reads through history of education, there is apparent agreement among many educators (both past and present) regarding importance of the affective domain in the learning process. Apparent, also, is that a strong emphasis toward cognitive development, encouraged by such movements as competency—or performance—based teacher education programs, and back-to-the-basics trends continue to influence classroom procedures. Such influences often result in neglect of the affective domain which, according to Miller (1976) and others, impedes cognitive learning.

Research and theory provide evidence which indicates successful teaching and learning occur when activities are focused on individual learner's cognitive and affective needs. However, many teachers and principals seem to take a different viewpoint. Physically attractive, quiet, orderly classrooms, and emphasis on factual content often replace individualized and humanistic concerns. Perhaps we have exchanged the individual for our success and content.

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